MERRY
XMAS!

Author´s Notes

Hello everyone! Thanks for reading Bleak chapter 6!

Bleak will be from now on a novel with a few illustrations an comic strips here and there.
I hope you can still enjoy the story

Important: Bleak will now be updated every Friday on my website and Sunday on any other websites.It will be updated like this until the end of the currently story arc

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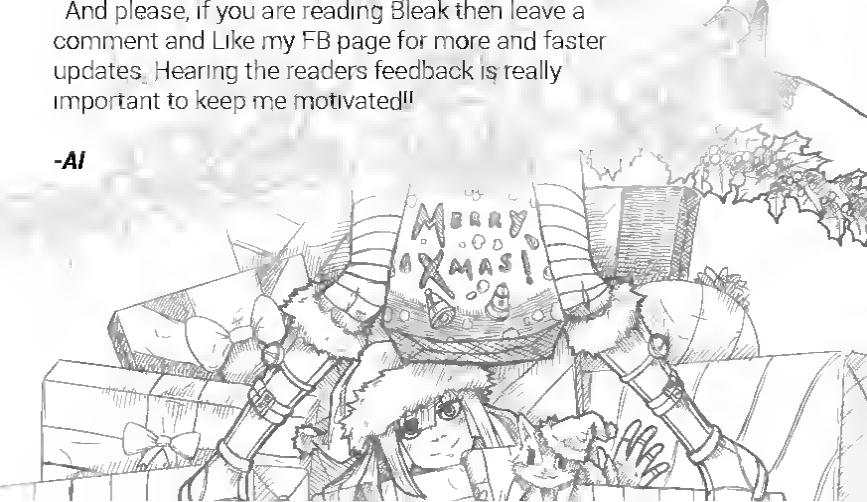
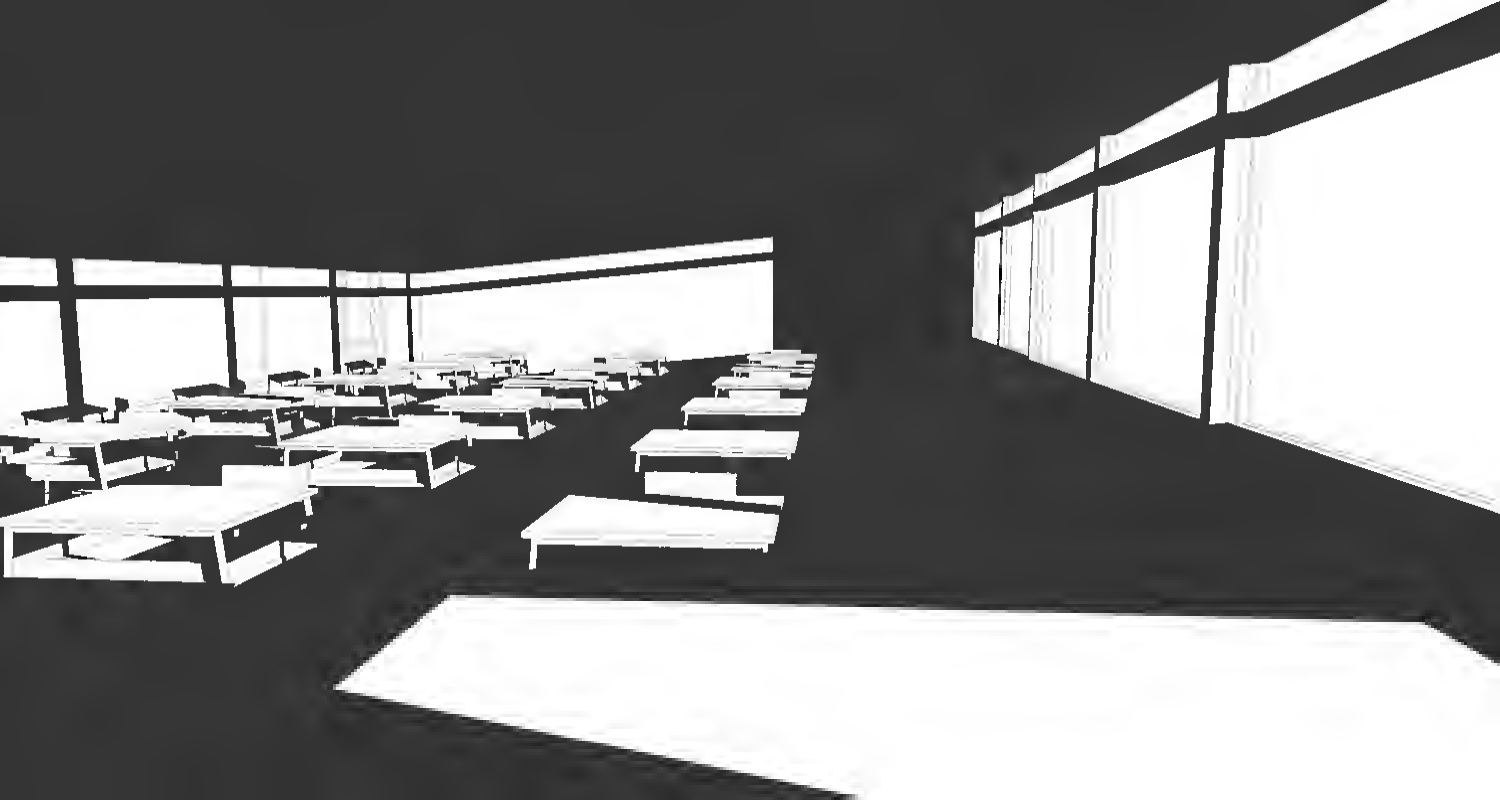
And please, if you are reading Bleak then leave a comment and Like my FB page for more and faster updates. Hearing the readers feedback is really important to keep me motivated!!

-AI





DREAM 7

"DID YOU GET IT?"

I completely froze for a few seconds... could it be everything I did all this Saturday was just... a dream?

"No... it's impossible... right?" No matter how much I look around, it just looks like I'm awake, even the reality check tells me I'm awake. When I looked at my pocket watch, instead of seeing the clock hands spinning fast and randomly it just shows me its 7:30 pm.

I feel my body getting the usual symptoms when I get really nervous. I'm starting to feel hot, itchy and sweating a lot.

"Huh...?" I notice then... even those symptoms feel real, even the feel of sweat falling down my face... could it be I have just been sleeping in my classroom? Is that what really happened??

I start to breath heavily as my anxiety grows, abnormally heavily, enough to actually get me worried about not being able to breathe.

In my panic I try to stand up. Immediately as I stand I feel a sharp pain on my chest. I fall back on my chair and grab my shirt with my right hand as my head falls on the top of the table even hitting it with my forehead, getting more and more difficult to breathe by each passing second.

At some point I look up and noticed something in front of me. On the top of the table right in front of me is a small piece of paper, there seems to be something written on. The letters are really small, but as I focus my sight I can clearly read " To AF" following by a small drawing of what looks like an apple.

"S...Sane?" Is what came to my mind immediately, since that's her seat, it has been for a whole week.

My legs feel numb, I can't stand up at all. So, I try to stretch my arm as long as I could, while having a difficult time with the pain on my chest that hurts with every move I make and focused on consuming as much oxygen as possible.

I finally reach the small piece of paper, unfold it and take a look.

"What time is it?" Is what it says. What a useless piece of information. What is it? A piece of paper she forgot to send me during class?? Besides, I just looked at my watch, its 7:30, it doesn't rea-

"What...?" My pocket watch is still on the top of the table, because of the anxiety attack I didn't really remember to put it back in my pocket.

"6:14...?" The pocket watch shows a completely different hour from what I remember seeing a minute ago...

I use two fingers to rub my eyes...what is it? Is it my contact lenses?

"8:55" What the f-

"You gotta be kidding me..." I grab my watch, close my eyes for a few seconds, and the open them to focus nervously on the watch right in front of my face."

"3:11"...it...keeps changing. The time...keeps changing. No matter how many times I look at it, it looks like it keeps changing in a blink of an eye...literally.

I doubt a normal malfunction could cause this, but just to be sure I pull the small mechanical piece that makes the hands of my pocket watch stop moving. As I confirm that the "seconds" hand has stopped spinning I close my eyes once more and keep them shut for a few seconds.

"12:49" That confirms it. Even thought it doesn't show the clock hands spinning randomly like I was expecting from the reality check, it's perfectly clear what this means.

"...It tricked me...I really am dreaming."

As I say that, I feel a hand touching my shoulder. It's a soft touch that I feel like I recognize but can't really recall who it could be. As I felt the touch, almost as a consequence, I feel the sensation of out of breath and the pain in my chest, gone. Even the itchy and hot feeling are now gone. I'm feeling completely fine now...maybe even somehow better than just "fine" for some reason I can't really understand.

"Hey!" I don't need time to recognize this voice, such a sweet voice is impossible to forget after all, because of that I'm not even a little bit scared even though a moment ago I was all alone in this classroom.

"Hey, Sane."

Sane: "Are you feeling alright now?"

"Well, yeah thanks. I'm...completely fine now. Hum..." I glare at her for a while...

Sane: "W-what is it? Is there something on my face?"

"I was just thinking that. I mean, you are just part of my imagination, a "projection of my subconscious" or whatever that old man called Dehler said...you are not real, right?"

Sane: "Uh...I don't know...What do you think?" I couldn't say out loud what I was thinking! C'mon... I'm dreaming I'm all alone in my classroom after classes are over, with a girl I find really cute. Could my subconscious be more obvious about what I was really thinking without even me realizing it? And I can't really say I'm not consciously thinking about it right now!

"Hey, mental projection of Sane...if you really are a projection of my subconscious then tell me: what do I think of the real Sane?" I was just curious.

Sane: "Mental projection of Sane? That's kinda rude, you know!" I get up as she speaks. I open the window to look down to remember how high the school building actually is. Rec told me I need to throw myself from a building while using my "zees" to enter the Dream Realm. It looks pretty easy when stated like that, but I'm about to piss in my pants when only putting a foot on the top of the window while looking down.

Sane: "Besides, that question is so obvious it doesn't need to be a projection of your subconscious to know, right?" I stop what I'm doing to look at her, with a foot on the window sill and the other one on top of my table.

"W-what do you mean?"

Sane: "I mean that you want to take me to your bed and do naughty things."

"!!!" I almost lose my balance and fall down the window upon hearing that, as I try to regain my balance I almost fell down the table but manage to avoid both.

"W-w-what's up with that superficial answer? T-that's just what an average teenager thinks all the time!! Seriously, I was expecting a more deep answer or something!"

Sane: "Hahahaha!!"She laughs in my face.

"B-besides it's not like that really crossed my mind." I mean, at least not seriously!

Sane: "You don't need to be so embarrassed! I'm just joking with you!"

"... Not funny then!"

Sane: "Really? That's strange, if I'm the projection of your subconscious I should have your sense of humor."

"..."

Sane: "But you know, you're right, that really is something rather superficial and average. If I really am a projection of your subconscious I should know much more interesting things about you than an average and superficial dirty thought."

"... What are you getting at?"

Sane "I'm just saying that a teenage boy in his second year of high school having...fantasies about girls his age is something so normal it hardly means anything more than he is a healthy young man with his hormones jumping all over the place"

"I...still don't get what you are trying to say"

Sane "About Sane, the real Sane. You having fantasies about her all the time wouldn't be strange at all. What's strange is that...you don't."

"...Now, that's something deep."

Sane. "Did you get it?"

"Nope."

Sane. " Aaaaahh...You can be so deeeense sometimes!"

"Just explain it in a simple way"

Sane "You are the one who says I'm your subconscious, do you expect me to be easy to understand?"

"Then just tell me wha-"She put her index finger in front of her lips, indicating me to shut up.

Sane "I don't think you could ever understand me the way you are right now. Besides, you are out of time."

"Huh?" She extends her arm, pointing outside.

I slowly look to my right, only to notice that a giant black thing appeared out of nowhere and is now right in front of the building. It's floating and right in front of the window, like it's...staring at me.

"W-w-what the hell is that!?" When I look back at her she is gone, I'm all alone once again in the classroom. I focus my attention on the giant black thing that, even though isn't moving and stays at the same distance, keeps transforming in shape, randomly and very fast. Sometimes it looks pitch black sometimes it looks like it's formed by many squiggles randomly changing

I felt scared at first and stepped back, but knowing this is a dream made me relax and approach the window. A few shapes appear in the

middle of that thing, looking like a white stylization of two eyes and a mouth, with a sad expression.

"What the hell?" Suddenly, the thing stopped transforming and there was a brief, eerie, complete silence. It sent a cold chill down my spine, I started feeling much more scared than before.

The silence is broken with the thing quickly transforming in shape again, but this time trying to enter the window I just opened and in my direction. Instinctively I close the window and shut my eyes, hopping that thing would just go away.

I felt the impact of it going against the glass, but the windows didn't break. I decided to look up but couldn't see a thing, there was no light, and then one of the lights in the classroom turned on automatically. With that faint light I can see all the windows covered with black texture. I couldn't see anything through them.

"Crap.. Crap, crap, crap!" I realized I couldn't jump off the building now. I tried to slightly open the window I just closed but it wouldn't move at all because of the black thing stuck in it.

"...What do I do now? Why is all this crazy stuff happening? Damn, what the hell!!" Calm down.. I have to calm down. I just have to check another classroom, yeah, there are a whole bunch of classrooms in the second floor, I just have to pick one of them to do the jump. Damn, I hope that black giant thing just doesn't show up again then.

As I decided on my next move while immobile and staring at the windows, I started to move again, I should hurry up. I turn around and walk towards the door.

"Huh?" As I move a step towards the door's direction I felt someone's arms evolving my waist. A weak attempt at stopping me from making another step. Considering that just now there wasn't anyone behind me I would usually freak out, even considering this is a dream I totally would. However I can sense the arms evolving me belong to a girl so I had a feeling I knew who she was.

"Sane!? I mean, fake Sane. What're you doing? Don't just appear out of nowhere, you'll give me a heart atta-"

"Don't go." Those words sent a chill down my spine, a much colder one than the black thing did, because I recognize this voice. The person behind me isn't Sane.

"You can stay here if you want, you know?" There's no mistake. I know this voice. It belongs to a girl I know, or used to. I don't really feel like talking about it.

I took her hands off my waist. She didn't resist at all and simply let me put her hands behind my back. Then I continued to walk towards the door in silence without looking back even once.

As I open the door to exit the classroom and then I see another person. At this point people randomly appearing out of nowhere doesn't surprise me anymore.

"What??" Wait, the person behind this door is... me. Not the "me" as I am now, but the "me" from one year ago. I changed a lot in one year, so I noticed right away.

Past Me: "Why don't you stay here?!You don't need to go!" After the initial shock I simply feel anger. Yeah, I can't stand looking at this "me" face. That stupid smile feels too artificial. Just get out of my way you idiot.

I remained in silence though, there is no need to waste time talking to my own imagination, specially not these.

Past Me: "Hey! Are you listening? Don't go, please." As I make a step to get out of the classroom this "Past Me" puts one hand aggressively on my shoulder.

I ignore in silence, not even looking at him right now. I simply try insisting one more time and try to get out of the classroom.

Past Me: "C'mon! Are you stupid??" He shouts that while pushing me away from the exit and getting between me and the door.

" "

Enough. I feel an immense anger right now. I don't even know exactly why butt suddenly I went mad with anger.

The floor starts shaking, and slowly the objects around the classroom start floating, it's a weird view but the anger I'm experiencing at the moment stops me from giving a damn.

I take a step and finally look my younger self in the eyes. I take another step and notice my Zees showed up, but this time strangely agitated and flying around my body and arms.

I don't really care about any of that now though. The only thing I have in my mind is passing through that door, not really because I need to anymore but because I want to.

"Shut! Up!" As I say that I punch my older stupid self right in the face. I don't think I've ever put so much anger into anything, let alone a punch. It felt like was punching a wall, because his face wouldn't move more than a few centimeters and I guess it's hurting me more than him judging from his expressionless face.

I put more strength into it, giving my all into that punch. Then something weird happens. Weird cracks show up in his face and start to crumble, revealing a creepy pink mask bellow.

As he starts falling down and hits the floor I immediately feel like I was also punched in the face. I felt an impact so abrupt that it sent me flying the opposite direction of my younger self.

Then I hit the floor but felt really weird, like I just had taken a ride on a crazy backwards roller coaster.

I'm also feeling a bit nauseous.

"...Huh? This..." I open my eyes and realize I'm not in that classroom anymore. I'm now in a strange place. It looks like the place where the old caravan is parked but there're some differences. For example, there's absolutely no one in the streets and the sky is pink. A strangely

surrealistic yet absolutely beautiful view that could only mean I'm not in the real world.

"I guess this is it, the Dream Realm, uh?"

Rec: "Finally! What took you so long??I've been waiting for a while now!" Rec makes a small pause and smiles in his very characteristic way. I couldn't avoid smiling a little myself, this view is just too fantastic not to.

Rec: "But anyway, congrats! You just made your first Lucid Dive into the Dream Realm.

You are now a true Oneironaut."